

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A printing system comprising:  
a print requester host; and  
5 a single or a plurality of print requestee  
printers connected via a network to said host;  
said host abstractly defining an output port to  
an actual printer as said print requestee printer, for  
printing.  
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2. A printing system according to claim 1, wherein  
upon abstract definition of said output port to  
said actual printer as said print requestee printer, said  
host automatically selects a specific printer for  
15 printing through sequential execution, between said  
host and said printer on said network, of a retrieval  
request from said host, a retrieval response from said  
printer, a print request from said host, and a response  
to said print request from said printer.  
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3. A printing system according to claim 2, wherein  
upon occurrence of a print request on said host,  
said host sends a retrieval request packet to all  
printers on said network, wherein  
25 said printer that has received said retrieval  
request packet from said host, if enabled for print,  
sends a retrieval response packet to said host, wherein

upon receipt of said retrieval response packet from said printer, said host selects as a requestee candidate a printer from which said host has first received a retrieval response, to send a print request packet to said requestee candidate printer, wherein

said requestee candidate printer that has received said print request packet sends a validation response packet to a print request to said host, and wherein

upon receipt of said validation response packet from said requestee candidate printer, said host determines said requestee candidate printer as a print requestee to execute print processing.

4. A printing system according to claim 1, wherein said printer that has received a retrieval request packet from said host sends a retrieval response packet to said host, said retrieval response packet containing communication information on said printer itself, wherein

upon receipt of said retrieval response packet from said printer, said host sends a print request packet to all printers on said network, said print request packet containing communication information on a printer selected, and wherein

upon receipt of said print request packet, said printer compares printer communication information

contained in said print request packet with its own printer communication information, said printer if coincident recognizing that said printer itself has been selected, to send a validation response packet to said  
5 host.

5. A printing system according to claim 1, wherein said host displays information indicative of a printer selected on the basis of a printer response  
10 packet, on a user interface.

6. A printing system according to claim 2, wherein said host makes a retrieval request to said printers on said network, said retrieval request  
15 containing unique printer specific information for specifying a printer, said host automatically selecting a specific printer that conforms with previously entered printer specific information, for printing.

20 7. A printing system according to claim 6, wherein said host sends a retrieval request packet to all printers on said network with unique printer specific information designated, wherein  
upon receipt of said retrieval request packet  
25 from said host, said printer sends a retrieval response packet to said host providing that said printer is enabled for print and that said designated unique printer

specific information is coincident with its own printer specific information, wherein

upon receipt of said retrieval response packet from said printer, said host when said received printer specific information coincides with said designated printer specific information sends a print request packet to said printer having coincident printer specific information, wherein

a specific printer that has received said print request packet sends a validation response packet to a print request to said host, and wherein

upon receipt of said validation response packet from said printer, said host determines said printer as a print requestee for print processing.

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8. A printing method for performing a printing operation by selective use of a single or a plurality of printers connected via a network from a print requester host, said method comprising the step of:

abstractly defining on said host an output port to an actual printer as a print requestee printer, to perform said printing operation.

9. A printing method according to claim 8, wherein upon abstract definition on said host of said output port to said actual printer as said print requestee printer, a specific printer is automatically

selected for printing through sequential execution,  
 between said host and said printer on said network, of  
 a retrieval request from said host, a retrieval response  
 from said printer, a print request from said host, and  
 5 a response to said print request from said printer.

10. A printing method according to claim 9, wherein  
 upon occurrence of a print request on said host,  
 a retrieval request packet is sent to all printers on  
 10 said network, wherein

said printer that has received said retrieval  
 request packet from said host, if enabled for print,  
 sends a retrieval response packet to said host, wherein  
 upon receipt of said retrieval response packet  
 15 from said printer, said host selects as a requestee  
 candidate a printer from which said host has first  
 received a retrieval response, to send a print request  
 packet to said requestee candidate printer, wherein

said requestee candidate printer that has  
 20 received said print request packet sends a validation  
 response packet to a print request to said host, and  
 wherein

upon receipt of said validation response packet  
 from said requestee candidate printer, said host  
 25 determines said requestee candidate printer as a print  
 requestee to execute print processing.

11. A printing method according to claim 8, wherein  
said printer that has received a retrieval  
request packet from said host sends a retrieval response  
packet to said host, said retrieval response packet  
5 containing communication information on said printer  
itself, wherein

upon receipt of said retrieval response packet  
from said printer, said host sends a print request packet  
to all printers on said network, said print request  
10 packet containing communication information on a  
printer selected, and wherein

upon receipt of said print request packet, said  
printer compares printer communication information  
contained in said print request packet with said its own  
15 printer communication information, said printer if  
coincident recognizing that said printer itself has been  
selected, to send a validation response packet to said  
host.

20 12. A printing method according to claim 8, wherein  
said host displays information indicative of a  
printer selected on the basis of a printer response  
packet, on a user interface.

25 13. A printing method according to claim 9, further  
comprising the steps of:

making a retrieval request from said host to said

printers on said network, said retrieval request containing unique printer specific information for specifying a printer; and

5 automatically selecting a specific printer that conforms with previously entered printer specific information, to perform said printing operation.

14. A printing method according to claim 13, wherein  
10 said host sends a retrieval request packet to all printers on said network with unique printer specific information designated, wherein

upon receipt of said retrieval request packet from said host, said printer sends a retrieval response packet to said host providing that said printer is  
15 enabled for print and that said designated unique printer specific information is coincident with its own printer specific information, wherein

upon receipt of said retrieval response packet from said printer, said host when said received printer  
20 specific information coincides with said designated printer specific information sends a print request packet to said printer having coincident printer specific information, wherein

a specific printer that has received said print  
25 request packet sends a validation response packet to a print request to said host, wherein

upon receipt of said validation response packet

from said printer, said host determines said printer as a print requestee to execute print processing.

15. A print requester apparatus for performing a  
5 printing operation by selective use of any one of a plurality of printers connected via a network, said apparatus comprising:

an output port that is abstractly defined as an output path to an actual printer when a print request  
10 takes place; and

a printer retrieval unit which, upon abstract definition of said output port, automatically selects a specific printer for printing through sequential execution, between said printer retrieval unit and said  
15 printer on said network, of a retrieval request from said host, a retrieval response from said printer, a print request from said host, and a response to said print request from said printer.

20 16. A print requester apparatus according to claim 15, wherein

upon occurrence of a print request, said printer retrieval unit sends a retrieval request packet to all printers on said network, wherein

25 upon receipt of a retrieval response packet from a print enabled printer, said printer retrieval unit selects as a requestee candidate a printer from which



said printer retrieval unit has first received a retrieval response, to send a print request packet to said requestee candidate printer;

upon receipt from said requestee candidate printer of a validation response packet to said print request packet, said printer retrieval unit determines said requestee candidate printer as a print requestee to execute print processing.

10 17. A print requester apparatus according to claim 16, wherein

said printer retrieval unit displays information indicative of a printer selected on the basis of a printer response packet, on a user interface.

15 18. A print requester apparatus according to claim 15, wherein

said printer retrieval unit makes a retrieval request to said printers on said network, said retrieval request containing unique printer specific information for specifying a printer, said printer retrieval unit automatically selecting a specific printer that conforms with previously entered printer specific information, to perform a printing operation.

25 19. A printer connected via a network to a print requester host, said printer comprising:

a retrieval response unit for allowing itself to be selected as a print requestee through a sequential execution of a retrieval response to a retrieval request from said host and a response to a print request from  
5 said host.

20. A printer according to claim 19, wherein  
said retrieval response unit issues a retrieval  
response packet if it is enabled for print when accepting  
10 a retrieval request packet from said host, and wherein  
upon a receipt of a print request packet from  
said host, said retrieval response unit issues a  
validation response packet to a print request so as to  
allow said host side to determine said printer as a print  
15 requestee.